

Alameda County
Congestion Management Agency (CMA)

Guaranteed Ride Home Program Evaluation
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



July 2003

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Alameda County CMA Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Program has been in operation since April 9, 1998. This report presents the results of the fifth annual program evaluation and covers program operations during 2002. The evaluation provides information about:

1. The effectiveness of the program's administration;
2. Statistics on employer and employee participation and trips taken;
3. The program's success in causing an increase in the use of alternative modes; and
4. Recommendations about any area(s) that need modification or expansion.

Program Description

The Alameda County CMA Guaranteed Ride Home Program is sponsored by the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency (CMA) and is funded with Transportation Funds for Clean Air (TFCA) from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

The GRH Program provides a "guaranteed ride home" to any registered employee working for a participating employer in cases of emergency on days the employee has used an alternative mode of transportation to get to work. Alternative modes include: carpools, vanpools, bus, train, ferry, walking and bicycling. Participating employers must have at least 100 employees at worksites located in Alameda County. As of December 31, 2002, 127 employers and 2,664 employees were registered with the program.

The objective of the program is to maximize modal shift from driving alone to commute alternatives including transit, carpools, vanpools, bicycling and walking. Based on this stated objective, the program can be considered a success. Each year of operation, the program has seen an increase in the number of participants that use alternative modes and an increase in the frequency with which they use alternative modes.

Historical Trends

The Guaranteed Ride Home Program began as a demonstration program in 1998. Over the course of the last five years, GRH has grown into a smoothly operating program with 127 registered employers, 2,664 registered employees, and approximately 145 trips provided per year.

The number of employees registered per year continued to increase in 2002, although the number of employers who registered in 2002 was slightly lower than the number who registered in 2001. Seventy-two (72) employers registered with the program during the initial six-month demonstration period. Another 28 registered during the 1999 operating

year, and 19 registered during the 2000 operating year. In 2001 and 2002, 13 and 12 new employers joined the program, respectively. The program now has a total of 127 participating employers. The total number of registered employers has decreased, however, because several employers have either relocated (outside Alameda County) or have gone out of business.

During the initial six-month demonstration period, about 880 employees joined the Guaranteed Ride Home Program. Another 794 joined during the 1999 operating year, and 591 in the 2000 operating year. In 2001 and 2002, 494 and 525 new employees joined, respectively. The program now has over 2,664 registered employees. Since 1998, the total number of employees has decreased due to layoffs and normal employee attrition.

A total of 674 trips have been provided from the time of the program's inception through the end of 2002. During the 2002 operating year, 144 trips were taken, a lower number than the previous three years. Most registered employees (87%) have never taken a trip. Of those who have taken trips, the vast majority (81%) have taken only one or two trips. This demonstrates the "insurance" nature of the program.

Based on the fact that each registered participant may take up to six trips in a one-year period, the rate that guaranteed rides are taken is very low. For example, at the end of 2002, there were a total of 15,984 potential rides based on a total enrollment of 2,664 employees. However, only 144 trips were actually needed that year.

Figure ES-1 illustrates some key historical trends for the Guaranteed Ride Home Program.

Figure ES-1 Guaranteed Ride Home Program Historical Trends

Trend	1998 ¹	1999	2000	2001	2002
Program Participants²					
Total Number of Employers	72	100	119	132	127
New Employers Registered	72	28	19	13	12
Total Number of Employees	880	1,674	2,265	2,759	2,664
New Employees Registered	880	794	591	494	525
Trip Statistics – All Trips (Taxi and Rental Car)					
Total Number of Trips Taken	57	156	168	148	144
Average Trips per Month	6.3	13.0	14.0	12.3	12.0
Average Trip Distance (miles)	28.7	36.2	37.8	42.5	43.08
Average Trip Cost	\$54.51	\$64.29	\$69.73	\$86.37	\$88.44
Trip Statistics – Taxi Trips Only					
Total Number of Trips Taken	57	156	168	148	136
Average Trips per Month	6.3	13.0	14.0	12.3	11.3
Average Trip Distance (miles)	28.7	36.2	37.8	42.5	42.07
Average Trip Cost	\$54.51	\$64.29	\$69.73	\$86.37	\$90.42 ³
Trip Statistics – Rental Car Trips Only⁴					
Total Number of Trips Taken	—	—	—	—	8
Average Trips per Month	—	—	—	—	4.0
Average Trip Distance (miles)	—	—	—	—	60.0
Average Trip Cost	—	—	—	—	\$55.00
Survey Results					
Number of Surveys Collected	215	350	270	346	517
Survey Response Rate	N/A	21%	12%	12%	19%
Percent Who Would Not Use an Alternative Mode Without GRH	15%	16%	19%	19%	34% ⁵
Increase in the Percent of Those Using Alternative Modes Four or More Times a Week	N/A	10%	15%	8%	15%

1 The Program began in April of 1998.

2 The number of employers and employees registered in previous years is actually higher than shown in the table. Some employers and employees have been deleted from the database due to job changes and employers going out of business. The numbers shown in the table are based on those currently registered in the database.

3 In 2002, the Friendly Cab rate increased to \$2.40 per mile plus wait time, and the Fremont City Cab/Net Cab.Com rate increased to \$2.00 per mile. All taxi fares include a \$2.00 flag drop fee and any toll charges in addition to the rate charged per mile.

4 The rental car demonstration program was initiated in late October 2002. Rides were taken in November and December 2002.

5 This figure includes 9% of respondents who stated that they would discontinue using alternative modes and go back to driving alone, as well as 25% of respondents who stated that they would use alternative modes less frequently.

Major Findings of the Evaluation

The program evaluation consists of an examination of the program's administrative functions, statistics on employer and employee participation and use, data from the annual survey of participating employees, and recommendations for program changes and enhancements. The following sections present the major findings from the evaluation.

Program Administration

Program Operating Principles

- To be eligible for the program, employers must have 100 or more employees. While some large employers throughout the county have not yet been contacted, it may be appropriate to review and evaluate this eligibility requirement in the coming year since there are several employers with less than 100 employees who have expressed an interest in participating in the program. Additionally, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Best Workplaces for Commuters program requires that employer participants offer their employees some type of emergency ride home program. Because employers with less than 100 employees are excluded from participating in the CMA's Guaranteed Ride Home Program, it may be more difficult or impossible for them to participate in the U.S. EPA's Best Workplaces for Commuters program.
- The process of enrolling and getting an emergency ride home continues to work smoothly.
- The use limitation of six trips per year continues to be appropriate. Very few program participants reach the limit. Only one person reached the limit in 2002, only one person took five rides, and one other person took four rides.
- The rental car demonstration program was successfully implemented in October 2002 in the Tri-Valley area (Dublin, Livermore and Pleasanton), and the first rental car rides were taken in November and December. The program has already realized an estimated savings of \$536 on ride costs, and participants who used rental cars were pleased with the flexibility and convenience of this new option.

Marketing and Promotions

- Approximately one-fifth of program resources are dedicated to marketing and promotion. The program has sought to leverage these resources by relying on participating employers to promote the GRH Program internally, and by seeking co-marketing opportunities with local transit agencies and with organizations that promote commute alternatives. In 2002, marketing efforts were directed primarily toward redesigning the program's literature and web site and launching the rental car demonstration program in the Tri-Valley area (Dublin, Pleasanton and Livermore).

- The availability of the marketing materials in electronic format continues to be a useful tool for promoting the program.
- The program literature and web site were updated and revised in 2002 in preparation for the rental car demonstration program and in response to feedback from other organizations and program clients. Interested and enrolled employees and employers can now obtain information at www.grh.accma.ca.gov or by emailing info@grh.accma.ca.gov.
- In 2002, a press release about the rental car demonstration program in the Tri-Valley area was faxed to local media. News articles about the Guaranteed Ride Home Program appeared in the Tri-Valley Herald, the Tracy Press, the Hacienda Network Newsletter, and RIDES monthly newsletter.
- Program staff participated in four different tabling and information sessions in 2002, including two transportation fairs in the City of Pleasanton, another in Downtown Berkeley, and an Earth-Day event at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. These face-to-face opportunities have been successful in spreading the word about the program and encouraging employees to sign up.
- Although direct marketing to employers was limited in 2002 as a result of efforts to redesign the program's literature and web site and to launch the rental car demonstration program, a total of 28 new employers were contacted about the program. Of these, 12 new employers registered, five of whom were in the underrepresented cities of Dublin, Livermore, Oakland, San Leandro and Union City.

Employer and Employee Participation

Employer and Employee Registrations

- Although the number of new employers who registered in 2002 (12 employers) was lower than the number who registered in 2001 (13 employers), the number of new employees registered increased from 494 in 2001 to 525 in 2002. As of December 31, 2002, 127 employers and 2,664 employees were registered.
- Total enrollment figures were lower in 2002 than in 2001 due to the deletion of employers and employees who are no longer active in the program. Several employers have moved or relocated, and a large number of employees have either been laid off or have changed jobs. In preparation for the rental car demonstration program, program staff performed a substantial database cleanup – old records were deleted, and the format of the database was revised to incorporate new, more detailed employee and employer contact information.
- North and east Alameda County (which includes the Cities of Alameda, Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland, Dublin, Livermore, and Pleasanton) continue to be the areas with the most employers enrolled in the program. A large percentage of registered

employers are located in Pleasanton, partly because of the concentration of employers in the Hacienda Business Park.

Trips Taken

- Through 2002, a total of 674 trips (666 taxi trips and eight rental car trips) have been taken. Approximately 144 trips were taken during the 2002 calendar year, for an average of 12.0 trips per month. The number of trips taken was lower in 2002 than in the previous two years, partly due to the continued economic downturn, which resulted in numerous layoffs.
- Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the employees enrolled have never taken a trip. Of the 355 employees who have taken a trip since the program's inception, 81% have taken only one or two rides.
- Personal illness was the most common reason for taking a trip in 2002 (29% of trips), followed by unscheduled overtime (24%). Other reasons included carpool or vanpool driver had to stay late or leave early (15%), personal crisis (12%), family member illness (13%), and carpool or vanpool vehicle breakdown (3%).
- Those who carpool or vanpool are somewhat more likely to use a guaranteed ride home trip than those who use other alternative commute modes. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of guaranteed rides home were used by car- and vanpoolers.
- The average trip distance has increased every year of the program. The average trip distance for all trips (taxi and rental car) in 2002 was 43.08 miles. The average trip distance for rental car trips was 60.0 miles, and the average trip distance for taxi trips was 42.07 miles. The average for all trips (taxi and rental car) taken since program inception through 2002 was 38.3 miles.
- The average taxi trip cost has increased every year of the program. The average taxi trip cost in 2002 was \$90.42. The average cost for all taxi trips taken to date is \$75.48.
- The cost of a rental car trip is \$55.00 regardless of mileage. It is estimated that the use of rental cars in 2002 saved \$536.00 in trip costs. The program was initiated in late October 2002, and eight rental car trips were taken in November and December 2002.

Employee Commute Patterns

- Nearly half of employee participants live in Alameda (29%) and Contra Costa (20%) Counties. Another 11% live in San Joaquin County, and 7% live in San Francisco and Solano Counties, respectively.
- The most common trip origin cities (for all trips taken through 2002) are Pleasanton (198 trips) and Oakland (191 trips). The most common trip destination cities are Oakland (69 trips), Manteca (57 trips) and Tracy (51 trips).

- For all trips taken since the program's inception, the most common trip destination county is Alameda County, followed by San Joaquin, Contra Costa and Solano Counties. These four counties account for 72% of the trip destinations. Alameda County alone accounts for 24% of trip destinations.
- The most popular alternative mode used by registered employees is train (BART or ACE) (42% of registered employees), followed by carpool (31%), bus (23%), vanpool (19%), and bicycle or walk (9%). (Note: overlap exists between categories as some employees use multiple modes.)

Employee Survey

Of the 2,771 surveys sent out, 517 were returned, resulting in a 19% response rate. Some surveys were not returned because employees had either been laid off or had left their company, or because several employers had relocated or gone out of business. The respondents represent 47 different participating employers, or approximately 52% of all active employers with one or more employees registered with the program.

Use of Alternative Modes

The Guaranteed Ride Home Program continues to be successful in encouraging the use of alternative modes. According to 2002 survey responses:

- Of those respondents who did not use an alternative transportation mode before joining the Guaranteed Ride Home Program (approximately 33%), 61% stated that the program was either very important or important in their decision to begin using an alternative mode for their commute to work. An additional 17% stated that the program was at least somewhat important in their decision to begin using alternative modes.
- Sixty percent (60%) of respondents reported that the Guaranteed Ride Home Program encourages them to use an alternative mode more frequently in their commute to work. Of these, 74% reported that the availability of a guaranteed ride home increased their alternative mode use by three or more days per week.
- Thirty-four (34%) of respondents reported they would not continue to use an alternative mode or would decrease their use of alternative modes if the Guaranteed Ride Home Program was not available.
- In response to questions about the use of alternative modes before and after joining the Guaranteed Ride Home Program:
 - The number of participants who drive alone dropped from 47% to 18% after joining the Guaranteed Ride Home Program. Based on GRH current enrollment (total enrollment through 1998), this represents 770 fewer people driving alone.
 - The number of participants who use an alternative mode four or more days a week increased from 54% to 70% after joining the Guaranteed Ride Home Program.

- The increased frequency of participants using alternative modes after joining the GRH Program represents 3,768 drive-alone one-way trips per week or 195,936 drive-alone, one-way trips per year replaced by alternative mode trips. Based on a median work to home distance of 28 miles, this represents 105,504 miles per week or 5,486,208 miles per year. Although not all of this shift can be attributed directly to the GRH Program, it is likely that the program had an important role in the mode shift.
- Most (60 to 69%) of the alternative mode trips being made by program participants occur during the peak commute hours of 7 to 9 am and 4 to 6 pm, when the impact on congestion and air quality is the greatest.

Customer Service Ratings

- The administrative functions of the Guaranteed Ride Home Program continue to earn very high ratings for the quality of customer service. The service was rated as either excellent or good by 95% of the respondents for clarity of information, 95% for hotline assistance, and 95% for voucher turn-around time.
- Ninety-four (94%) of those who took a ride and completed a ride questionnaire in 2002 were pleased with the quality of service provided by the taxi company. Of those who took rides, only three people reported problems. Two of the reported problems stemmed from excessively long wait times (60 minutes), and one was due to the driver speeding while driving on the freeway.
- The few complaints about transportation service were distributed between all three taxi companies, and no apparent pattern of problems emerged with a particular taxi company.
- All participants who used a rental car in 2002 were pleased with the service provided by Enterprise, and program staff did not receive any complaints.

Program Recommendations

1) Implement the Rental Car Program Countywide.

The success of the Tri-Valley rental car demonstration program thus far provides a strong rationale for extending the use of rental cars countywide. Furthermore, the demonstration program already encompasses over half of currently registered employers and employees, so expansion of the program would not be a major undertaking. Expanding the program to other areas would involve following many of the same steps for implementation of the demonstration program, with much of the groundwork already completed.

2) Review the Guaranteed Ride Home Program's Eligibility Requirements for Possible Changes.

Although the program's eligibility requirements have been adequate to date, these requirements should be reviewed in light of the fact that several medium and smaller sized employers (those with fewer than 100 employees) have expressed interest in the GRH Program. Additionally, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Best Workplaces for Commuters program requires that employer participants offer their employees some type of emergency ride home program. Because employers with less than 100 employees are excluded from participating in the CMA's Guaranteed Ride Home Program, it may be more difficult or impossible for them to participate in the U.S. EPA's Best Workplaces for Commuters program.

Program staff should study the impacts of expanding the program to employers with less than 100 employees with regard to additional staff time and materials costs that may be required. Program staff also should estimate the number of employers with 100 or more employees who have not yet received information about the GRH Program, as well as the number of medium- and small-sized employers who may be interested in participating in the GRH Program.

3) Continue to Implement a Comprehensive Marketing Approach

Nearly all of the recommendations made in the 2002 Program Evaluation Report with regard to program marketing were fully implemented in 2002:

- Program literature has been improved and updated;
- A new program web site was created;
- We expanded and strengthened our co-marketing efforts with other organizations that promote commute alternatives;
- We increased program exposure through local media coverage; and
- We contacted inactive employers (particularly in the Tri-Valley area) and updated the program database by eliminating employers that had closed or relocated and employees who had been laid off or left their employer.
- Although direct marketing to employers was limited in 2002, five employers from underrepresented areas were contacted and enrolled in the program this year, and an additional six employers located in underrepresented areas were contacted (but did not enroll).

In 2003, marketing efforts will continue to focus on 1) co-marketing with other programs promoting commute alternatives; 2) direct marketing to employers; 3) maximizing program exposure via the internet and other media; and 4) maintenance marketing and outreach activities to inactive (or minimally active) employers.

4) Develop a List of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Program Participants.

Although the program literature was revised and improved during 2002, there are a number of more obscure questions that have arisen, the answers to which would

benefit numerous employee participants. Having a FAQ posted on the program's web site and sent to all new enrollees would allow some people to have their questions answered up front, and may help prevent unintentional misuse of the program.

5) Investigate Program Changes to Provide Taxi Rides from BART Stations Outside of Alameda County as a Cost Savings Measure.

Several cases have arisen where employees who live outside of Alameda County use a bus to travel between their home and a BART station, and then use BART to travel to work. If one of these employees has to work unexpected overtime which causes her to miss the last connecting bus from the BART station to her home, she currently would have to take a taxi from her workplace all the way home, rather than from the BART station to her home. This is due to the fact that the program only contracts with taxi providers who operate within Alameda County.

If the rental car program is expanded countywide, this may no longer be an issue since employees could rent a car (although this option would likely be more expensive than a taxi ride between the nearest BART station and someone's home outside of Alameda County). Alternatively, the program administrator can investigate the possibility of contracting with other taxi providers outside of Alameda County.